April Workplace Eye Health and Safety Month

Where you are most likely to suffer an eye injury

In spite of safety programs and protective equipment, every day more than 2,000 working people in the United States suffer an eye injury.

Damage to the eyes is usually caused when something unexpected happens. It could be a sudden splash of caustic chemical or an airborne sliver of metal.

Workplace injuries are the leading cause of vision loss and blindness caused by an accident. Of the 2,000 injuries per day, 10 percent to 20 percent will be disabling because of temporary or permanent vision loss.

Many of those injured say they didn't think they needed to wear eye protection or were wearing inappropriate eyewear.

Doctors at the American Academy of Ophthalmology say proper eye protection is a matter of vital importance, especially in construction, manufacturing and automotive repair.

Eye health includes more than accident prevention. As more people use computers, eye fatigue and difficulty focusing have become common problems.

In themselves, computer screens don't damage vision. To reduce eye fatigue, computer users should take frequent breaks and rearrange their workstations for easier access to their computers. Wearing proper glasses or contact lenses can often relieve eye fatigue. Sometimes heating and air conditioning systems can make eyes feel dry and scratchy. It could make you think some-thing is in your eye. Over-the-counter eye drops usually relieve symptoms. If the problem continues, see your eye care professional for an evaluation. There you have it. Wear eye protection when there is even the slightest chance of an injury and make changes in your workstation to relieve eye fatigue. Your eyes will be safer and healthier if you make the extra effort.

Experts believe that the right eye protection could have lessened the severity or even prevented 90% of eye injuries in accidents.

Q: Why is eye safety at work important?

A: Eye injuries in the workplace are very common. More than 2,000 people injure their eyes at work each day. About 1 in 10 injuries require one or more missed workdays to recover from. Of the total amount of work-related injuries, 10-20 % will cause temporary or permanent vision loss.

Experts believe that the right eye protection could have lessened the severity or even prevented 90% of eye injuries in accidents.

Q: What are the common causes of eye injuries?

A: Common causes for eye injuries are:

- **Flying objects (bits of metal, glass)**
- **Tools**
- **Particles**
- **Chemicals**
- **Harmful radiation**
- **Any combination of these or other hazards**

Q: What is my best defense against an eye injury?

A: There are three things you can do to help prevent an eye injury

- **Know the eye safety dangers at work-complete an eye hazard assessment**
- **Eliminate hazards before starting work. Use machine guarding, work screens, or other engineering controls)**
- **Use proper eye protection.**

Q: When should I protect my eyes at work?

A: You should wear safety eyewear whenever there is a chance of eye injury. Anyone working in or passing through areas that pose eye hazards should wear protective eyewear.

Q: What type of safety eyewear is available to me?

A: Safety eyewear protection includes:

- **Non-prescription and prescription safety glasses**
- **Goggles**
- **Face shields**
- **Welding helmets**
- **Full-face respirators**

Q: What type of safety eye protection should I wear?

A: The type of safety eye protection you should wear depends on the hazards in your workplace. If you are working in an area that has particles, flying objects, or dust, you must at least wear safety glasses with side protection (side shields). If you are working with chemicals, you should wear goggles. If you are working near hazardous radiation (welding, lasers, or fiber optics) you must use special-purpose safety glasses, goggles, face shields, or helmets designed for that task.

Q: What is the difference between glass, plastic, and polycarbonate safety lenses?

A: All three types of safety lenses meet or exceed the requirements for protecting your eyes.

Glass lenses

- **Are not easily scratched**
- **Can be used around harsh chemicals**
- **Can be made in your corrective prescription**
- **Are sometimes heavy and uncomfortable**

Plastic lenses

- **Are lighter weight**
- **Protect against welding splatter**
- **Are not likely to fog**
- **Are not as scratch-resistant as glass**

Polycarbonate lenses

- **Are lightweight**
- **Protect against welding splatter**
- **Are not likely to fog**
- **Are stronger than glass and plastic**
- **Are more impact resistant than glass or plastic**
- **Are not as scratch resistant as glass**

Q: eye protection does work?

So please use it!